Réseau de Recherche en Santé Mentale chez les Autochtones

Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research

Widening the Circle

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Save the dates – August 15-19, 2011!
NAMHR Summer Institute and Annual Conference will be held here in Montreal. Stay tuned for details.

About NAMHR

The Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (NAMHR) is a collaboration between academic and community-based researchers, mental health providers, and Aboriginal organizations. NAMHR aims to build research capacity to address the mental health needs of Aboriginal people in Canada. NAMHR was established in 2001 with funding from the Institute for Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH) of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Moving On

– Colette Isaac

I can't believe it is two years that I have been here at the "nerve centre" of the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research. Time flies, they say.

My home: Moose Deer Point First Nation

In my short stint here we have contributed to the development of 31 new researchers with over $607,000 in scholarships, fellowships, internships, and research allowances. We held Annual Conferences in Vancouver and Montreal, and Summer Institutes here in Montreal. And we were successful in another round of CIHR funding to ensure we can keep doing this for a few more years.

I feel very privileged to have had the chance work among such a strong and dedicated group of academic researchers in Aboriginal mental health research across Canada. The idea of bringing all these people together was a stroke of genius, and provides an excellent opportunity for new researchers in the field. The National Gathering of Graduate Students has been previously held in Halifax and Vancouver (and planned for Regina this year). Researchers and students from all 9 NEAHRS have a chance to get together and talk about student research, its challenges and opportunities, with others facing the similar situations across the nation.

Aboriginal mental health is a very broad term that touches on all aspects of life as we consider that a good life is one lived in balance. So as I prepare to move on to the next stage of my life, I want to say thanks to everyone who has been part of this stage. I will still be around and about, and expect that for some of you our paths will cross again. I remain grateful for the opportunities given, the lessons learned, and the friendships made.

G'chi miigwech

The Roots of Resilience Research Project with Wemindji

– Morgan Kahentonni Phillips
(MA Social & Cultural Anthropology)

As part of the CIHR-funded Roots of Resilience: Stories of Transformation, Healing and Resilience project, Gregory Brass (PhD candidate) and I travelled 1400 kilometres north of Montreal to the Cree Nation of Wemindji to explore Cree resilience last October. Wemindji is a community located at the mouth of the Maquatua River along the eastern coast of James Bay. With a population of approximately 1200, it is one of nine Cree communities in Eeyou Istchee (northern Quebec). Our six-day mission was to complete a series of focus groups and individual interviews begun by Stéphane Dandeneau, a Métis scholar who is part of the Roots of Resilience research team. We had the opportunity to hear the narratives of Cree participants from 16 to 71 years of age. The trip was a success thanks to community members Maudi Ratt, Linda Stewart, Dorothy Stewart, among others.

As Indigenous researchers, Greg and I both have an academic background in anthropology although our roots run deep into our own traditional territories: Saulteaux – Anishnawbeg (Sask.) and Kanien'kehá:ka (Haudenosaunee). With this in mind, I arrived in Cree territory with my own assumptions of individual and community resilience, and was aware of some of the similarities that Indigenous people share such as the importance of language and culture retention, changing lifestyles due to loss of land, and the effects of colonization and assimilation. What is unique about the overall Roots of Resilience project is the exploration of sources of resilience found in Cree, Inuit, Mi'kmaq, Métis and Kanien'kehá:ka communities that contribute to well-being. Our aim is to share understandings of overcoming adversity, which has important implications for mental health promotion, policies, and clinical practice.

Like other Indigenous communities in North America, Weminjdi has had its share of challenges. It is a fairly new community that was relocated from its original location, Old Factory, in the late 1950s. Our focus is how challenges are overcome. Many Cree told us that spending several weeks at a time in the bush with family, hunting, reconnecting with the land and being together is one way of overcoming adversity. During our stay in Wemindji we took part in the annual Moose Festival: the community gathers to share the hunt and enjoy activities such as the moose scavenger hunt. I was struck by the overall quietness and remoteness of the community as well as the state of the art facilities such as the recreation hall, pool, fitness centre and youth centre. The Cree language is very alive and still spoken by all ages. During the next few months the team will be analyzing data collected and will be preparing to report back to the community next fall. To learn more about the Roots of Resilience project visit our website at http://www.mcgill.ca/resilience/

Moose Festival (Wemindji, October 2010): Moose Scavenger Hunt)

The Benefits of Participatory Learning

NAMHR Summer Intern 2010

–Talia Bronstein

As an undergraduate student at McGill University, I have certainly learned a great deal from my courses. However, many of the Arts programs at McGill, including my own department of Anthropology, are highly lecture based. Articles, essays and, in higher-level courses, discussions are utilized to teach students the course material. While I have undoubtedly grown intellectually as a result of my classes, in the past year I was afforded two highly unique opportunities for "hands-on" learning, which taught me more about the world around me and myself than many of my other classes.

A new course was developed in 2010 for anthropology, social work, and law students to learn about Aboriginal populations in Canada. With a small class size of 20 students, we attended a week of lectures led by instructors from the different departments and then we spent one week camping at the Kahnawake reserve. Our week of cultural immersion consisted of visits to institutions such as the courthouse, social services office, and hospital, and we were also given the opportunity to participate in a sweat lodge and moon ceremony, learn traditional beadwork and be shown medicinal plants in our area. Two highly knowledgeable elders from the community accompanied us for the majority of our stay. This class is highly atypical for the faculty of Arts at McGill, but it was an invaluable experience where traditional lecture and book-based teaching was combined with participatory research and activities to get a deeper, more internal sense of what it means to live on a reserve.

As a NAMHR intern in the summer of 2010, I was fortunate enough to attend the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian Residential Schools National Event in Winnipeg with my supervisor, Dr. Ronald Niezen. As an undergraduate student, there are very few opportunities to conduct first hand research

or fieldwork. In attending the TRC, I was able to listen and learn from the chilling, heart-felt testimonies of Residential School survivors as well as talk to a wide array of people who attended the event. As a result, I am now writing my honours thesis on the therapeutic costs and benefits of public testimony at the Canadian TRC. I am thankful for the challenging opportunity to incorporate my own fieldwork into a thesis as it has given me a greater understanding of the field of anthropology.

I have absolutely learned a great deal from the books I have read and the lectures I have attended. Nonetheless, I urge faculty members and research organizations to facilitate opportunities for students to fully and actively participate in their own learning. I hope that in reading this, other undergraduate students will be more inclined to take part in participatory learning and research programs, as the experience has the potential to challenge you in new ways and provide fresh perspectives about your course matter, your academic interests, as well as yourself.

The Journey

NAMHR Summer Intern 2010

– Sarah Nelson

I moved to Prince George from Ontario, and it's hard to explain how I got here. It wasn't exactly an orderly process of one decision leading to another – more like a series of happy but completely unpredictable accidents.

The first decision happened in second year. Leafing through the University of Toronto undergraduate calendar, I came across the African Studies program. It sounded interesting, so I picked it as a minor. I didn't know just how interesting it would be.

Most people hear "African studies" and assume that I learned about history and geography. This is true, but more often we discussed colonization and decolonization, wondered where the boundaries of Africa are, and deconstructed colonial myths. I ended up travelling to West Africa and living there for a few months, which changed me in many ways.

The second decision was to write a paper about the James Bay Hydroelectric Project and its impact on the Cree people of that area. As I wrote, a connection suddenly formed in my brain. I had spent all this time learning about colonization and its effects in Africa, when colonization was happening right here at home. The fact that it took me until my mid-20s to figure this out made me furious. I'm still not over it.

My third decision happened in Ottawa after I had graduated. I was working three part-time jobs and barely making ends meet, searching for a better job but not having any luck. I remembered the First Nations Studies program at UNBC, which I had discovered when I was writing about the James Bay project, and applied.

Today, I am helping to organize a series of Elders' and health care providers' discussion groups. With the help of my supervisor, Dr. Josée Lavoie, I have formed a productive, mutually beneficial, and fun, relationship with Central Interior Native Health Society (CINHS) here in Prince George. Staff from CINHS and I have organized these groups for Elders and providers to talk about health and well-being. Begun as discussion groups for my Master's thesis, it looks as though they will continue long after my thesis is done. It's more than I could have hoped for – and definitely more than I planned.

NAMHR Summer Internships

Accepting applications until March 31, 2011.

One of the key priorities of the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research is to train new researchers, especially from Aboriginal backgrounds, in order to develop and strengthen capacity in mental health research with Aboriginal communities. Our summer internship is a core element in that process.

The NAMHR Summer Student Internship Program is a 10-week paid internship under the supervision of a NAMHR mentor (see www.namhr.ca/mentors-coinvestigators.html). Interns work in various aspects of the research process (planning, data collection, analysis, and/or synthesis) in projects that are determined by the mentor. Although it is not encouraged, in exceptional cases applicants may suggest their own projects but they must be discussed with and confirmed by the mentor prior to the application. Applicants may develop co-supervisory relationships with NAMHR mentors in projects that are clearly related to Aboriginal mental health but are primarily under the supervision of an investigator outside of the network.

For more information, visit our website:
www.namhr.ca

NAMHR Small Grants

Accepting applications until April 30, 2011.

We are pleased to offer our Small Research awards for 2011 – 2012. Open to university-based investigators or Aboriginal community organizations, we will support new exploratory programs of research in all areas bearing on the mental health and well-being of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Up to $5,000 will be awarded to successful applicants in three categories:

1. Seed Grants
2. Knowledge Translation
3. Research Allowances

See the announcement on our website for complete application details.

NAMHR 2010-2011 Scholarship Awardee Accomplishments

Publications

Allen, J.W., Lawford, H.L., & Pratt, M.W. (under review). Future parenting selves in young adulthood: Relations with gender, generativity and attachment style. *Journal of Research in Personality.*

Pratt, M.W., Lawford, H.L., & **Allen, J.W.** (in press). *Early fatherhood, generativity and men's development: Setting out on a two-way street to maturity.* In J. Ball & K. Daly (Eds.) Engaging fathers in social change: Lessons from Canada: University of British Columbia Press.

Calvez, S. (under review). Multi-group analysis of the MIDA model: Acculturation of Indian and Russian immigrants to Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations.*

Calvez, S. (2010). *Technical report assessing the need for student monitoring processes.* University of Guelph Aboriginal Resource Centre.

Trocme, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Black, T. & **Fast, E.** Et al. (2010).

Public Health Agency of Canada (eds.). Ottawa, 2010.

Fast, E., Sinha, V. & Trocmé, N. (in preparation). *Youth and Housing in the Regional Longitudinal First Nations Health Survey.* Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa.

Sinha, V., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B. & MacLaurin, B., **Fast, E.** (2011). *The First Nations component of the 2008-Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – Major Findings.* First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Ottawa.

Fast, E., Diabo, T., **Sablonnière-Griffin, M.**, Collin-Vézina, D. & Sinha, V. (in preparation). *Historical trauma and the Canadian Justice System: A New Outlook.* Research and Statistics Division, Justice Canada, Ottawa.

King, J. (under review). Identity and reincarnation. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies.*

Roesch, R., & **Rogers, B. J.** (in press). Review of J. M. Brown & E. A. Campbell (Eds.), The Cambridge handbook of forensic psychology. *Canadian Psychology.*

Ebbesen, L., **Victor, J.**, Chopin, N., & Clarke, L. (accepted). *The CUISR-SRIC collaboration: Toward community-based action research?* In B. Jeffries, L. Clarke, I. Findlay, D. Martz (Eds.), Community-based research (CBR) in Saskatchewan. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.

Presentations (accepted and completed)

Collin-Vézina, D. & **De La Sablonnière-Griffin, M.** Changement dans les pratiques de retention des signalements pour aggressions sexuelles. Association des Centres Jeunesse du Québec. Montreal. October 2010.

Fast, E., Sinha, V., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B. (2010, September). A Capacity-Building approach to National level First Nations research. Presented at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Conference, Honalulu, Hawaii.

Fraser, S., Rousseau, C., Kirmayer, L.J., Arauz, M.J., Kasudluac, R. Discipline versus maltraitance en foyer pour jeunes sous la protection de la jeunesse. Conférence annuelle de la Société Québecoise de Recherche en Psychologie. Québec, Québec, 18-20 mars 2011.

Fraser, S., Kirmayer, L., Rousseau, C., Arauz, M., Brumster, P, Kasudluc, R. La recherche communautaire auprès de jeunes Inuits retirés de leur communauté. Conférence annuelle de la Société Québecoise de Recherche en Psychologie. Québec, Québec, 18-20 mars 2011.

Luig, T. (2011) Promoting Well-being Through Land-based Pedagogy. International Conference on Health, Wellness, and Society. 20-22 January 2011, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley California, USA.

Burnett, J. Engaging the Big Questions in Gambling Studies. Alberta Gaming Institute's 10th Annual Conference. Banff, Alberta. April 7-10, 2011.

Mailing List

The NAMHR mailing list is for researchers, health professionals, and others interested in Aboriginal mental health and is a useful place to post announcements, post questions or locate resource people.

To subscribe to the NAMHR listserv, send a registration email directly to the listserv program at listserv@lists.mcgill.ca. In the email the subject is to be left blank, and the body of the email should contain the following one line:

> SUB NAMHR firstname lastname (replace the firstname and lastname with your first and last names).

Everyone is welcome to subscribe to the listserv.

Production

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Comments, Suggestions, Submissions

If you wish to submit an article or have information about projects, organizations, announcements or upcoming events, that you would like published in Widening the Circle, please contact colette.isaac@mail.mcgill.ca. Articles should be 300-350 words and contain contact information for the said project or organization.